

## POLITICAL ORGANIZATION

Chiefs wield little authority. They work in their fields and hunt like the rank and file of the group. Their position is conspicuous only when the community organizes a big feast, which is always given in the chief's name. Chiefs also are the leaders of any collective undertaking. They maintain their hold on their people by distributing gifts and looking after their well-being (Koenigswald, 1908 b, p. 47). A chief who is overbearing or miserly is abandoned by his followers. The son of a chief succeeds to his father if he is acceptable to the group (Horta Barboza, 1913, p. 25). 622

## LIFE CYCLE

**Birth and childhood.**—Formerly, a pregnant *Caingang* woman did not consort with her husband, and both observed food taboos. Women gave birth in the forest, sheltered from the supposedly maleficent moonbeams.<sup>4</sup> A few days after delivery the mother and child were fumigated, a rite accompanied by a drinking bout. 843 844 [852]

Nowadays, a *Caingang* woman bears her child wherever she happens to be, knowing how to take care of herself even if she is alone. Usually, she is delivered squatting while a midwife embraces her from behind, raising her now and then until travail is over. The navel cord is cut with a fingernail and tied with a caraguatá string.

Among the *Aweikoma*, the placenta and umbilical cord, wrapped in medicinal herbs, are placed in a basket and sunk in the stream. The mother winds a long cord around the ankles of the baby and removes it 15 days later during a feast given by the father to a group of relatives. The umbilical cord is disposed of by the mother's brother or his wife or by the mother's sister, who later become ceremonial parents. 846

In other *Caingang* groups, the mother pulls open the infant's eyelids immediately after birth "in order that he might see," breathes into his eyes and ears, and presses his temples and head from front to back. The father does not pay much attention to the baby until it is old enough to speak: Then he gives it 5 to 10 names. In the south, the names were bestowed without any rite after the above-mentioned ceremony. [553] ●

The *Caingang* show the greatest tenderness to their children, seldom punishing them or using harsh words. 854

According to Horta Barboza (1913, p. 27), when a boy reaches the age of 7, his mother rubs his body with the leaves of a certain tree and pours water over his head to make him courageous and diligent. 852 553

<sup>4</sup> It is reported that they gave birth unassisted in a special cabin (Serrano, 1939, p. 26).

- 553 The child then receives a new name. Later, he may adopt names  
 352 that refer to notable incidents of his life.

852 In the Santa Catarina group, the perforation of the boys' lower lip  
 304 at the age of 2 or 3 is marked by great celebrations. Women, holding  
 gourd rattles, dance with warriors, who beat the ground with their  
 spears. The children are intoxicated with beer, and shaken until  
 half unconscious, when their ceremonial fathers pierce their lips  
 with a sharp stick (Henry, 1941, pp. 195-197).

- 582 **Marriage.**—According to Baldus' census (1937 c, p. 43), men are  
 generally older than their wives, in some cases as much as 15 to 20  
 years; among 37 percent of the couples there was a difference of 10  
 years.

A man marries when 18 to 20 years of age. If his bride is not yet  
 of age, he stays with her parents, waiting for the first signs of pu-  
 berty. In case of child betrothal, the lad's parents have to provide  
 for the girl's subsistence.

- 595 **Polygyny** is mentioned by all the early sources, but details vary.  
 Some authors declare that it was an old man's privilege, others that  
 it was restricted to the chiefs, good hunters, or famous warriors.  
 There are also indications of sororal polygyny and of marriage simul-  
 taneously to a woman and her daughter (Teschauer, 1929, p. 350).  
 In *Tupi-Guarani* fashion, a girl often married her mother's brother.

[194] The *Caingang* of Palmas are, and claim always to have been  
 monogamous.

Manizer (1930) states that though a man may not marry his  
 cousin—he does not specify which—he usually takes her as a concubine  
 until her own marriage. If pregnancy occurs meanwhile, the girl,  
 as a rule, commits abortion. It often happened that a man grew  
 fonder of his cousin than of his legal wife, and that he sometimes  
 [578] resolutely opposed her marriage. The continuation of such relation-  
 ship was bitterly resented by the legitimate wife.

For the *Aweikoma*, Henry infers that 60 percent of all marriages are  
 monogamous, a fair proportion of the remainder being polyandrous.

- 585 A marriage ceremony witnessed by Manizer (1930, p. 776) took place  
 during a drinking bout. Some old men seized the bridegroom and bride  
 and pushed them toward each other in spite of the woman's resistance.  
 Then they dragged them into the bridegroom's hut and left them there  
 under a blanket. The following day the woman ran away, but was  
 brought back by force.

- 591 **Matrilocal residence**, formerly the *Oaingang* rule, is still frequent,  
 though many couples set up their own households. Baldus (1937 c,  
 p. 43) heard "that only lazy men lived in their father-in-law's house  
 and that, should the father-in-law die, the husband would have to  
 'govern' his mother-in-law."